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# A Comparison between Asian and Australasia Backpackers Using Cultural Consensus Analysis

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## Abstract

This study tests the differences in the shared understanding of the backpacker cultural domain between two groups: backpackers from Australasia and backpackers from Asian countries. A total of 256 backpackers responded to a questionnaire administered in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Krabi Province (Thailand). Cultural consensus analysis (CCA) guided the data analysis, to identify the shared values and the differences in the backpacker culture of the two groups. The findings revealed that while the two groups share some of the backpacker cultural values, some other values are distinctively different from one another. The study provides the first empirical evidence of the differences in backpacking culture between the two groups using CCA. Based on the study findings, we propose some marketing and managerial implications.

**Keywords:** South East Asia, backpacking, independent travel, flashpacker, cross-cultural.

## 1.0 Introduction

Historically (Wheeler & Covernton, 1983; Hampton & Hamzah, 2010), backpackers travelled to three main destinations in Asia - Kabul, Kathmandu and Kuta (Bali) - , all together known as 3K. Later, South and Southeast Asia witnessed unprecedented growth in the number of backpackers, and became the forerunner of large scale mainstream tourism in Southeast Asia (Spreitzhofer, 1998). The region continues to be acknowledged and acknowledges itself as the primary backpacker destination in the world (Hampton and Hamzah, 2010). The historical backpacker

route in the region runs through Malaysia, Thailand (Bangkok), Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City), Cambodia (Phnom Penh, Siem Reap) and Indonesia (Bali and Yogyakarta) (Hampton & Hamzah, 2010; Ian & Musa, 2008).

Several researchers (e.g. Spreitzhofer, 1998; Lloyd, 2003; Teo & Leong, 2006; Muzaini, 2006; Ian & Musa, 2008; Reichel, Fuchs & Uriely, 2009; Hampton & Hamzah, 2010; Musa & Thirumoorthi, 2011) studied various aspects of backpacking tourism in Southeast Asia. Some argue research on backpacker tourism (Allon & Anderson, 2010; Brenner & Fricke, 2007; Chitty et al., 2007; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Nash, Thynee, Davies., 2006; Pearce & Foster 2007) remains western centric, reflecting the majority of backpackers worldwide. Winter (2007, 2009), Teo and Leong (2006) and Muzaini (2006) call for greater attention to understand Asian tourists, particularly as the region continues to develop as a dynamic destination and tourist generating region. There are recent efforts to decentralize backpacking research from its current Western orientation, to open up space for studies like Teo and Leong's (2006) post-colonial examination of Asian backpackers' contestation of stereotypes and marginalization in the backpacker Mecca of Khao San Road, Bangkok. There are also efforts focussing on cross-cultural backpacker studies. For example, Prideaux and Shiga (2007) examine the differences of Japanese and non-Japanese backpackers in Australia. Cross-cultural differences in backpacking are important as backpacking becomes more globally mainstreamed.

Laland, Olding-Smee and Feldman (2000) and Hofstede (2001) define culture as shared social norms, common values and attitudes of a group. The view of culture as shared beliefs and practices not only prejudices the issue of what constitutes cultural content but also, as a consequence, directs attention away from understanding the dynamic nature of social processes (Atran, Medin & Ross, 2005, p. 745). Spicer (2001) points out that cultural disparity corresponds to the basic assumptions of a group that one is associated with, thus it cannot be treated as irrelevant. Psychologists still conceptualize cultural differences in terms of "cultural dichotomies" even though the unprecedented expansion of tourism connects people from around the globe (Hermans and Kempen, 1998).

Generally, research on culture focuses on geographically localized areas as the fundamental units. "Cultural dichotomies" describes the differences between the western and non-western culture, and by and large, most research focus on these differences (Hermans and Kempen, 1998). However, culture also exists as a global phenomenon, of which backpacking is a good example. Backpackers are known to display a distinct culture, compared with other tourists (Muzaini, 2006; Paris, 2010; Paris, 2012), which we will elaborate in detail in literature review. However, since basic ethnic culture is rather stable and unlikely to change during the course of backpacking (Hotolla, 2004), backpackers often exhibit cultural differences according to their regional nationalities.

The main objective of this study is to test for the differences in the shared understanding of the backpacker cultural domain between two groups - backpackers from Australasia (i.e. Australia

and New Zealand) and backpackers from Asia - using cultural consensus analysis (CCA). We also examined the differences between the two group's demographics, behaviour and past travel experience. While several studies referred to possible differences between Asian backpackers and backpackers from Western countries (e.g. Teo & Leong, 2006; Muzaini, 2006), this study employs CCA from the field of cognitive anthropology to empirically explore the differences between each group. CCA accesses the respondents' knowledge of the cultural domain, measures the cultural knowledge of respondents and finally derives a culturally correct answer based on respondents' consensus on the items measured (Dressler, 1996).

Paris (2012) was the first to apply CCA to examine the emerging subculture of flash-packers. The study discovered the presence of a shared cultural understanding within the sample of the backpacker cultural domain, and that there was also no significant difference between flash-packers and non-flash-packers in their shared understanding of backpacking culture. Paris' (2012) findings also suggest that there are latent cultural identities (Becker & Greer, 1960) that influence the level of cultural understanding among backpackers. As Paris (2012, p. 1109) explained, "each backpacker carries with them personal identities formed through the participation in multiple cultures, which in-turn shape their experience and understanding of the backpacker culture." In that study, he found that individuals identities related to past travel experience and employment status provided some explanation the latent identities that influence their cultural understanding of the backpacker domain, he suggested that future studies should look to examine other potential identities. In the current study we build upon these findings by employing CCA to differentiate between Australasian and Asian backpackers, in the degree of their shared backpacking cultural understanding.

This study contributes to knowledge on the aspect of backpacking cultural differences between Asian and Australasian backpackers. The results may be of value in designing marketing communication targeting these two different market segments. It also provides the stakeholders of backpacker enclaves the possible direction for new products and services development, as well as visitor management.

We organize this paper as follows. The next section presents literature review which consists of definitions of culture, backpackers' culture, cultural consensus theory and cultural consensus analysis (CCA). A detailed description of the method will follow, after which we present the study results. The final sections are on the research findings' discussion and conclusion.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Backpacking Culture**

#### *2.1.1 Definitions of Culture*

Even though researchers studied culture from various contexts, there is no consensus in its definition (Brumann, 1999). According to Taylor (1871, p.7) “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man [sic] as a member of society” (quoted from Wright, 1998). Hutchins (1995) sees culture as “any collection of things, whether tangible or abstract...it is a process. It is human cognitive process that takes place both inside and outside the minds of people. It is the process in which our everyday cultural practices are enacted” (p.354). Anthropologically, Goodenough (1964) defines culture as “being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term” (p.36)

The above definitions of culture provide no basis for consensus. The following definitions reflect a different approach as to what culture is. Some anthropologists (e.g. Cohen 1974; Macdonald 1993; Morley & Chen 1996) stressed that culture is “dynamic, fluid and constructed situation, in particular places and times”. This is in tandem with Gatewood (1983) who stated that culture is “highly adaptive”. Culture is an umbrella word that encompasses a whole set of implicit, widely shared beliefs, traditions, values and expectations that characterize a particular group of people (Pizam, Pine, Mok & Shin, 1997). It represents values held by a majority of their members and influences people’s behavior on all social levels (Reisinger & Turner, 1997, p.141). These definitions open up the possibility of investigating cultural consensus. Therefore, the present study operationalises culture as defined by Reisinger and Turner (1997).

### *2.1.2 Cross-cultural Differences and Assimilations*

Understanding the impact of cross-cultural backgrounds on tourism has been a mainstay of tourism and hospitality research. In the tourism context, cross-cultural differences affect the perception of service quality (Espinoza, 1999), travel service (Crotts & Erdmann, 2000), information search (Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Ortega & Rodriguez, 2007) and holiday satisfaction (Master & Prideaux, 2000). Besides, cross-cultural differences also influence host and guest interactions (Reisinger & Turner, 1997; Reisinger & Turner, 1998; Thyne, Lawson & Todd, 2006), the perceived impact of political instability on tourism (Seddighi, Nuttall & Theocharous, 2001) and hostel customers (Yuksel, Kilinc & Yuksel, 2006).

Hottola (2004) argued that the question of assimilation as a result of intercultural adaptation is rather irrelevant in the context of tourism and other short-term visits. Even though backpackers are known for long stay, the acculturation process may not take place if they are not interested in knowing about local culture. Here culture is viewed from the perspective of cross-cultural differences and assimilation of culture. The former is focused on why two individuals of different nationality differ; while the latter focuses on the extent that an individual can absorb others’ culture. As stated earlier in the introduction, another aspect of culture is global in orientation (Featherstone, 1990), of which backpacker is one of the examples. Backpackers are known for certain ways of travelling, compared to other tourists (Muzaini, 2006; Paris, 2010).

The following sections discuss cultural aspects of backpacking culture in terms of their travel behaviour.

### *2.1.3 Backpackers' Profiles, Socialization, and Cultural Experience*

While the backpacker market originally was quite homogenous, the continued globalization and mainstreaming of the backpacker culture has resulted in an increasingly diverse backpacker population. From the enclave management perspective, managers may regard backpackers as homogeneous even though they are from many different countries, age groups, educational backgrounds, and cultures. Often accommodation, facilities and activities offered in the backpacker enclaves are not cultural specific, but rather for backpackers as a whole regardless of their nationalities. Indicating the pre-conceived idea that backpackers require similar services provision.

Social interaction with other backpackers and locals are a part of backpacking culture. Several studies examined the interaction among backpackers (Adkins & Grant, 2007; Axup & Viller, 2006; Axup, Viller, MacColl, & Cooper, 2006; Enoch & Grossman, 2010; Murphy, 2001; Peel & Steen, 2007). Murphy (2001) stated that the discussion with fellow backpackers normally revolves around travel routes and backpacking experiences. Backpackers also indicate their preferences to interact with backpackers who share the same nationality and language (Murphy, 2001; Maoz & Bekerman, 2010).

Enoch and Grossman (2010) and Peel and Steen (2007) note the desire for interaction with host populations by many backpackers. Meeting others, including locals, is one of the main backpacker motivations (Howard, 2005; Paris & Teye, 2010; Paris, 2008). Through the interaction with knowledgeable locals, backpackers learn invaluable aspects of local culture. Nevertheless, Howard (2005) also reported that very few backpackers actually mingle with the locals. Many engage in other activities such as sightseeing, partying and shopping (Paris, 2010b). With the Internet and social media, backpackers can access easily to the required information pertaining to backpacker destination(s) without having to consult the locals (Paris, 2009).

Closely aligned with the motivation to interact with local people, is the motivation to encounter a different culture (Howard, 2005; Paris & Teye, 2010). Evidence suggests that backpackers, in practice, often participate less in cultural activities to understand local culture (Muzaini, 2006; Scheyvens, 2002; Visser, 2003). Speed (2008) and Aziz (1999) noted that backpackers spend less time communicating with the locals as they prefer other activities, as mentioned earlier by Howard (2005). Additionally, even though backpackers have intention to learn about local culture (Paris & Teye, 2010), in reality, they often stay within the backpacker bubble (Maoz & Bekerman, 2010) and in the company of other backpackers from a similar cultural background. Compounding this, recent advances in social and mobile technologies further disrupt the 'local' travel experience. Backpackers are able to maintain continual presence and interaction with their personal networks virtually (Germann Molz & Paris, in press). This behaviour, whether



conscious or unconscious, limits their opportunities to interact meaningfully with the locals. Some even distance themselves away from fellow backpackers of other countries.

Peel and Steen (2007) and Muzaini (2006) noted that backpackers attempt to look and behave like locals by immersing themselves in the local culture. Using an ethnographic approach, Muzaini (2006) examined the strategies adopted by both Western and Asian backpackers to look 'local' within Southeast Asian backpacker enclaves. Some western backpackers dress like locals, despite the fact that it is nearly impossible to pass as local people. Even though studies reported that backpackers do try to consume local food (Enoch & Grossman, 2010; Maoz & Bekerman, 2010), there are however, some who prefer to patronize fast food outlets such as KFC and McDonald's (Visser, 2003), and there are some who yearn for familiar food from home (Enoch & Grossman, 2010; Maoz & Bekerman, 2010) while backpacking in other countries.

#### *2.1.4 Backpackers' Behaviour*

Some researchers express concern pertaining to undesirable behaviours among backpackers (Aziz, 1999). Among them are drug consumption (Maoz & Bekerman, 2010; Uriely & Belhassen, 2006), excessive alcohol drinking (Howard, 2007) and sexual encounters (Aziz, 1999). For Aziz (1999), these behaviours result in negative socio-cultural impacts and offend the host community. However, some studies indicate that the actual consumption of drugs and alcohol by most backpackers is overstated (Speed, 2008).

Many backpackers now travel with technological gadgets such as smart phones, tablet computers, digital cameras, laptops, iPods and other Wi-Fi enabled mobile devices (Germann Molz & Paris, in press; Ball, 2010; O'Reagan, 2008; Hannam & Diekmann, 2010; Paris, 2012; Paris, 2009; Paris, 2010a). The use of mobile and social technologies to document and share experiences, often instantaneously, while travelling is now an important part of the travel experience. Additionally, these devices blur the boundary between the 'road' and 'virtual' backpacker cultures (Paris, 2010a) as they are able to maintain co-presence and intimacy with those both corporeally and virtually proximate to them (Hannam, Butler, & Paris, 2014).

Some previous research suggests that backpackers place cultural status and currency in their ability to travel independently and off-the-beaten-track, away from touristy places. In practice, however, backpackers often do take tours (Slaughter, 2004) and visit the same famous tourist attractions as other tourists (Hottola, 2008; Kain & King, 2004; Slaughter, 2004). Another backpacker cultural status symbol is the ability to bargain and get a good or 'local' price. While some backpackers tend to bargain as they are budget conscious, many take it a step further, bargaining over very small amounts, oblivious as to how ill-mannered they would appear to the locals (Aziz, 1999). In some cases bargaining can be attributed to the home culture of the backpackers too. Teo and Leong (2006) stated that backpackers from Asian countries have different spending behaviours. They found that Japanese and Korean backpackers have higher buying power, whereas Singaporeans and Malaysians tend to bargain more.

Taking into account the literature on backpacker behaviour and culture, the purpose of this study is to examine the different travel culture between backpackers from Australasia and backpackers from Asian countries using cultural consensus theory and cultural consensus analysis (CCA). The following section discusses cultural consensus theory and analysis in detail.

## **2.2 Cultural Consensus Theory (CCT) and Cultural Consensus Analysis**

### *2.2.1 Cultural Consensus Theory (CCT)*

Boster (1980, 1985) addresses the question of how one can infer that individuals share common culture despite having inter-individual differences. The author pointed out that informants' agreement on a particular domains indicates the degree of homogeneous acceptance in a particular culture. Later in 1986, Romney, Weller and Batchelder (1986) developed Boster's work into cultural consensus theory. The theory is a collection of analytical techniques and models that can be used to estimate cultural beliefs and the degree to which individuals know or report those beliefs (Weller, 2007, p. 339). The notion of this theory is "the correspondence between the answers of any two informants is a function of the extent to which each is correlated with the truth" (Romney, et al., 1986, p.316).

Researchers use CCT to identify the "culturally correct answer" based on aggregation of responses by the participants. According to Romney et al. (1986), the consensus model is based on three underlying assumptions. Firstly, the informants come from a common culture and the cultural version of truth is the same for all. Secondly, there is an independence of responses by individuals. Thirdly, all the questions asked revolved around a topic and must be at the same level of difficulty (p.317-318). The formal cultural consensus model (Romney et al., 1986) and the informal model (Romney, Batchelder & Weller 1987) are among the approaches to consensus theory. The former employs open ended and multiple-choice questions while the latter allow ordinal, interval, and ratio-scaled responses. General Condorcet model (GCM) (Weller, 2007), latent truth model (LTM) (Batchelder & Andrs, 2012), cultural consensus analysis (CCA) (Romney et al., 1986; Grant & Miller, 2004) are among the models used in application of CCT.

### *2.2.2 Cultural Consensus Analysis (CCA)*

Cultural consensus analysis (CCA) is a cognitive anthropological method which objectively measures and describes the amount and the distribution of culture among a group of individuals (Romney et al., 1986). Goodenough (1957), who championed a cognitive theory of culture, states that "a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members" (p. 167). CCA is based on the propositions that individuals with a common culture have shared cultural knowledge and that the individual's



agreement with the shared cultural knowledge varies according to each individual's possession of culturally correct knowledge (Romney, et al., 1986; Weller, 1987).

As a theory, it specifies that any member of the culture, who shares beliefs regarding a cultural domain with the majority, has more knowledge about the culture than those who do not (Ratanasuwan, Indharapakdi, Promrerk, Komolviphat & Thanamai, 2005, p. 628). Cultural consensus analysis pools information based on the pattern of respondents' knowledge in the cultural domain (Kim, Donnell, & Lee, 2008). The "culturally-correct belief" can be derived based on the consensus of the members' beliefs in the given cultural domain.

As a method, Ratanasuwan et al. (2005) proposed that CCA provides a way to uncover the culturally correct answers to a set of questions related to a specific cultural domain, in the face of certain kinds of intra-cultural variability (p. 628). Cultural consensus analysis is a statistical method that "allows researchers to estimate culturally correct answers from patterns of agreement without knowing answers in advance. Such analysis begins with examining the similarity in survey responses, followed by establishing a level of confidence to survey questions for each survey participant, and lastly provides a scientific estimate of a culturally correct answer to the question" (Kim et al., 2008, p. 1459).

Researchers have applied CCA in a wide variety of contexts namely medical and medical anthropology (Smith et al., 2004; Romney et al., 1987; Garro, 1986; Moore, Brodsgaard Mao, Miller, & Dworkin, 1997), environmental anthropology (Grant & Miller, 2004; Miller, Kaneko, Bartram, Marks, & Brewer, 2004), sociology (Caulkins & Hyatt, 1999) and psychology (Brooks & Bull, 1999).

### *2.2.3 CCT and CCA Application to Tourism Studies*

Cultural consensus analysis is also suitable for application in leisure and tourism research (Chick, 1981; Parr & Lashua, 2004; Li, Chick, Zinn, Absher, & Graefe, 2007). Chick (2009) stated that CCA is a useful method for developing a more complete and deeper understanding of leisure behaviour. Gatewood and Cameron (2009) used CCA to determine if residents of the Turks and Caicos have a shared cultural understanding of tourism. Ribeiro (2011) applied CCA to study the behaviour of spring break tourists, while Kerstetter, Bricker, and Li (2010) examined the sense of place among Fijian Highlanders within the context of nature-based tourism development. One of the advantages of CCA is that it requires only a small sample size to provide estimation on the extent of informants' agreement with a set of beliefs which is not based on assumptions (Grant & Miller, 2004; Ross, 2004).

As earlier stated in the introductory section, to date, only Paris (2012) studied backpacker culture using CCA. The main purpose of the study was to explore the emerging flash-packer subculture. The study empirically supported the notion that there is a unique cultural domain of backpacking. Using a Quadratic Assignment Procedure (QAP) linear regression model, Paris

(2012) tested the hypothesis that there was greater within group agreement than between group agreement for two subgroups: flashpackers and non-flashpackers. The study found that there are no unique differences. However, the secondary analysis suggested that there are latent cultural identities that influence backpackers' agreement with the backpacker cultural domain. Paris (2012) briefly explored some of these latent identities, including gender, age, and work status. However, the study fell short of examining the potential influence of regional or national identities on individuals' agreement with the backpacker cultural domain. Furthermore, the sample was skewed towards Western backpackers. The present study presented in this paper focuses on overcoming this limitation and filling in a gap suggested by Paris (2012) using CCA.

The backpacking culture refers to the specific practices or travelling choices by backpackers that shape the perception and represent backpacking culture. This study addresses the backpackers' shared beliefs focussing at the individual-level. We derive "culturally correct" responses from the perspective of backpackers using CCA. Paris (2012) used CCA to distinguish flashpackers vs non-flashpackers which are the sub-segments within the backpackers. In this study, we focus on the two groups namely Australasian and Asian backpackers. The regional groups are neighbouring to each other. The regions are developing both socially and economically, with increasing ties. We expect there will greater interest in each other between the two groups. Using distance decay theory (Taylor, 1983; McKercher & Lew, 2003; Greer & Wall, 1979), these two groups are more likely to travel to each other's destinations, because of their close physical proximity. Thus knowing each other's culture, may enhance backpackers experience and facilitate the development of better products and services provision.

### **3.0 Method**

Data was collected using a self-administered survey at selected backpacker enclaves in Malaysia and Thailand using the combination of purposive (for the enclaves) and convenience (for backpackers) samplings. The enclaves sampled in Kuala Lumpur are Changkat Bukit Bintang and Petaling Street; while in Thailand, the sampled enclaves are Kao San Road (Bangkok), Koh Phi Phi Don and Rai Leh (Krabi Province). Hampton and Hamzah (2010) acknowledged the importance of these enclaves as being heavily patronized by backpackers in Asia. Within the enclaves we reached the respondents by convenience sampling. We approached individual managers or owners of the backpacker's hostels and explained the study purpose. The absolute criterion for data collection was the respondents must be only from Asian countries, Australia and New Zealand. To minimize the intrusion into their guests' privacy, most hostel owners and managers preferred to distribute the questionnaire themselves. For each backpacker hostel, we left maximum of ten questionnaires to managers/owners to be administered by them. A month later, we collected the completed questionnaires from the hostels. Data collection was carried for the month of August 2011. We made efforts (through communication with the managers/owners) to ensure that the two groups are well represented, based on their regional nationalities. In total we distributed 400 questionnaires to the stated enclaves. After a month we collected a total of

256 valid responses, of whom 135 are from Asia and 121 from Australia and New Zealand. Thus the study's response rate is 64.0 per cent.

The survey gathered respondents' demographic information including age, gender, education, employment status, nationality, and previous travel experience. For cultural consensus items, we designed a set of sixty dichotomous (Yes/No) cultural norms statements of the backpacking cultural domain. We developed cultural norm statements from content analysis of previous literature (i.e. Hannam & Diekmann, 2010; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Enoch & Grossman, 2010; Murphy, 2001; Peel & Steen, 2007, Paris, 2012), our own backpacking experiences and several informal interviews with backpackers. We worded the questions in such a way that there are a balanced number of positively and negatively worded questions, all of which are on the same difficulty level. We adopted most of the cultural norms items in this study from Paris (2012) who developed detailed cultural domain statements in the study. We pilot tested the questionnaire on 30 backpackers in Bangkok during the month of June 2011, the results from which we used to amend the survey instrument, to improve its measurement's reliability and validity.

We used CCA to analyse the data. The data analysis for this study included several parts. *Firstly*, we carried out descriptive analyses, using SPSS 16.0, to provide background information on the sample. *Secondly*, we used the UCINET version 6.232 (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002) to conduct the cultural consensus analysis. The CCA included three procedures. First, we performed factor analysis to extract the level of data agreement. Romney et al. (1986) referred to this as minimal residual factor analysis. The software automatically rotates the data matrix so that the factor analysis is conducted on individuals, not on the items. A single cultural model is indicated by a single dominant factor. Second, we produced a knowledge score for each respondent, which shows the level of cultural knowledge for the individual. The score is essentially the individual's correlation with the first factor, and typically ranges from 0 to 1.0, with a score of 0.5 indicating that the individual provided the culturally correct answer 50 per cent of the time (Caulkins, 2001). The third procedure calculates the culturally correct answer for each question. The UCINET software produces the 'answer keys' by accumulating the agreements between responses. We derived the agreements on the assumption that agreement between individuals, based on Bayesian weightings, is a function of the level of culturally-correct knowledge each individual has.

*Thirdly*, we applied a quadratic assignment procedure (QAP) linear regression model to a set of matrices to measure the similarity within and compare similarity between two a-priori segments. We broke the study sample into two a-priori groups based on the nationalities of the respondents: Asia and Australasia. The QAP analysis in this study followed the procedure recommended by Hruschka, Sibley, Kalim, and Edmonds (2008), Romney, Moore, Batchelder, and Hsia (2000) and Paris (2012) which includes two steps. The first step was to prepare the data matrices, and the second step was to apply a QAP linear regression model to those matrices. We conducted

data analysis using UCINET 6.232, MatLab, and SPSS 16.0. We chose QAP regression to examine the differences between the groups for two main reasons. First, it allows for the examination of the non-independence of observations while at the same time analyzing pairs of individuals (Hurbert & Shultz, 1976). Second, QAP allows for whole matrices to be treated as variables in regression analysis. This is important because the data in the matrices cannot be assumed to be independent. Standard regression would result in an underestimation of the standard errors (Krackhardt, 1987). The following section presents the results of the analysis.

## 4.0 Results

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of respondents. For Australasian backpackers, 64.4 per cent are male, while 35.6 per cent female. The gender is more balance among Asian backpackers with 53.6 per cent male and 46.4 per cent female. The Asian group is slightly older, with an average age of 30.5 years compared to 25.2 years for the Australasian group. Similar to previous claims backpackers are generally educated. About 75% of backpackers in both groups completed either their four years university education or post-graduate studies. The majority of the backpackers are employed either part-time or full time. There was a larger percentage of Australasian backpackers who are students (25.1%) compared to Asians (11.3%). Only a small percentage of backpackers from both groups were un-employed (15.9% for Australasian, 11.3% Asians).

**Table 1: Respondents Profile**

Attribute	Australasian	Asian
Gender		
Male	77 (64.4%)	72 (53.6%)
Female	44 (35.6%)	63 (46.4%)
Total	<b>121</b>	<b>135</b>
Age (average in years)	25.2	30.5
Education		
Junior High School	0	5 (2.4%)
High School (up to year 12)	31(25.6%)	30 (22.6%)
College (4 year)	62 (51.2%)	83 (61.9%)
Graduate School (advanced degree)	28(23.3%)	17 (13.1%)
Total	<b>121</b>	<b>135</b>
Employment		
Student	30 (25%)	15 (11.3%)
Employed (Part-Time)	57 (46.7%)	93(68.8%)
Employed (Full-Time)	15 (11.4%)	12 (8.8%)
Unemployed	19(15.9%)	15 (11.3%)

Table 2 presents backpackers' previous travel experience. In terms of the number of previous international trips and number of countries visited, the results indicated that the majority of respondents in both groups had a large amount of previous travel experience, and only six individuals overall had not previously travelled internationally. For Asian backpackers the regions travelled to the most previously were South East Asia (75.6%), Australia/Pacific (28.9%), and China/Japan (28.1%). For Australasian backpackers, the most previously visited regions were Australia/Pacific (81.8%), Europe (77.7%), North America (56.2%), and South East Asia (33.9%). During previous trips, the Asian group had shorter trip (57.8% between 0 to 2 weeks) compared with Australasian group (71.9 % more than six week). This is reflected both lower overall budget (USD \$1,255 vs. \$11,367), and daily budget (USD \$ 59 vs. \$89), all of which may also be the result from data collection locations, which were in Asian region. As for self-identity, the majority of both Asian (53.3%) and Australasian (67.8%) prefer "traveller" over "backpacker" or "tourist".

Table 2: Respondents Previous Travel Experience

**Table 2: Respondents Previous Travel Experience**

Attribute	Asia		Australasian	
Number of Previous International Trips				
0	4	3.0%	2	1.7%
1 to 3	21	15.6%	18	14.9%
4 to 6	17	12.6%	40	33.1%
7 to 10	36	26.7%	33	27.3%
11 to 13	23	17.0%	8	6.6%
14 to 16	18	13.3%	5	4.1%
more than 16	16	11.9%	15	12.4%
Total	135		121	
Regions Visited on Previous Trips				
Australia/Pacific	39	28.9%	99	81.8%
SE Asia	102	75.6%	41	33.9%
China/Japan	38	28.1%	33	27.3%
South Asia	23	17.0%	24	19.8%
Africa	11	8.1%	29	24.0%

Central Asia/Middle East	28	20.7%	19	15.7%
Europe	23	17.0%	94	77.7%
North America	22	16.3%	68	56.2%
South America	5	3.7%	34	28.1%
Central America/Caribbean	3	2.2%	39	32.2%
Number of Countries Visited on Previous Trips				
0	2	1.5%	3	2.5%
1 to 4	19	14.1%	8	6.6%
5 to 8	17	12.6%	13	10.7%
9 to 12	32	23.7%	28	23.1%
13 to 16	25	18.5%	25	20.7%
17 to 24	23	17.0%	18	14.9%
more than 25	17	12.6%	26	21.5%
Total	135	100.0%	121	100.0%
Average Trip Length of Past Trips				
0 to 2 weeks	78	57.8%	5	4.1%
2 to 6 weeks	36	26.7%	29	24.0%
more than 6 weeks	21	15.6%	87	71.9%
Total	135	100.0%	121	100.0%
Self-Identity During Previous trip				
Tourist	57	42.2%	22	18.2%
Traveller	72	53.3%	82	67.8%
Backpacker	44	32.6%	56	46.3%

Table 3 shows respondents' agreements to sixty cultural norms statements to this study. We tested three cultural consensus models: 1) the whole sample, 2) Australasian, 3) Asian. To test whether there is greater within-group than between-group similarities for the two groups, we ran a quadratic assignment procedure (QAP) linear regression model. We then examined individual items for the difference between the two groups, using independent T-tests.

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Table 3: Cultural norm statements

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Table 3: Cultural norm statements			
Statement Text	Proportion Answering "Yes"		
Agree with the statement:	Asia	Australasia	Whole
Sex while backpacking is more free than	36.9%	84.4%	53.5%



when at home***			
If you tweet or Facebook all of the time while backpacking you diminish the experience	39.3%	53.3%	44.2%
It is not a good idea to go local*	19.0%	37.8%	25.6%
Backpackers help each other	86.9%	93.3%	89.1%
The journey is more valuable than the destination	78.6%	80.0%	79.1%
The more countries the better**	79.8%	48.9%	69.0%
There is something odd about backpacking when older	40.5%	35.6%	38.8%
It is better to have sex with other backpackers than with locals***	15.5%	46.7%	26.4%
A good backpacker does lots of research before leaving home***	84.5%	51.1%	72.9%
The cheaper the trip the better the thrill**	70.2%	46.7%	62.0%
Eating weird food is all part of the experience	67.9%	89.9%	75.2%
Sex with locals is sort of gross**	31.0%	20.0%	27.1%
Backpackers who go to Australia are different than backpackers who go to Peru	46.4%	53.3%	48.8%
A good backpacker always goes with the flow	64.3%	62.2%	63.6%
Backpacking is really for the young	22.6%	24.4%	23.3%
Backpackers like to brag about their experiences	67.9%	80.0%	72.1%
Backpacking alone is not risky	51.2%	46.7%	49.6%
Backpackers are more patient and tolerant of people*	79.8%	60.0%	72.9%
It is ok to go to Starbucks or McDonalds when travelling to get a break	72.6%	75.6%	73.6%
Locals don't like backpackers	10.7%	22.2%	14.7%
Backpackers want to find themselves while travelling	71.4%	77.8%	73.6%
Backpackers develop an understanding of other cultures	93.3%	89.3%	90.7%
The internet provides a better source of information than guidebooks	76.2%	73.3%	75.2%
Major tourist attractions are too touristy	65.5%	68.9%	66.7%
Most backpackers are just like regular mass tourists	48.8%	40.0%	45.7%
Backpackers never carry laptops with them	25.0%	17.8%	22.5%
Backpackers arrange things themselves	84.5%	73.3%	80.6%
Taking local transportation is better than flying	66.7%	71.1%	68.2%
Time doesn't matter when traveling*	41.7%	57.8%	47.3%

Sleeping in a park, on a bench or in an airport builds status	26.2%	40.0%	31.0%
Backpacking is a better way to interact with locals	79.8%	71.1%	76.7%
Backpackers seek extreme experiences when they travel	79.8%	88.9%	82.9%
Going on organized tours makes the travel experience less authentic	66.7%	57.8%	64.6%
Backpacking is a more free way to travel	85.7%	95.6%	89.1%
Backpackers party too much**	17.9%	42.2%	26.4%
There are too many hippy type backpackers*	36.9%	17.8%	30.2%
Socializing with other backpackers is an important part of the experience*	85.7%	97.8%	89.9%
Backpackers often share their experiences online through Facebook, email, and blogs	84.5%	91.1%	86.8%
Lonely Planet is the backpacker bible	50.0%	40.0%	46.5%
It's ok to spend extra money on once in a lifetime experiences	85.7%	95.6%	89.1%
To be considered a backpacker a person must travel for a long time, like a year	27.4%	15.6%	23.3%
Most backpackers are from North America, Europe or Australia	64.3%	68.9%	65.9%
It is better to travel off the beaten track*	61.9%	80.0%	68.2%
Backpackers don't need to shower everyday**	23.8%	48.9%	32.6%
Traveling with other backpackers is a good way to save money	70.2%	82.2%	74.4%
The best travel tips are spread by word of mouth*	77.4%	91.1%	82.2%
Backpacks are better than suitcases*	72.6%	88.9%	78.3%
Backpacking allows people to see the world as it really is***	89.3%	57.8%	78.3%
Real backpackers do not take photos while travelling	16.7%	20.0%	17.8%
It is essential to get the best deal and pay local prices**	85.7%	60.0%	76.7%
Facebook is useful to stay in contact with other people met during the trip	82.1%	80.0%	81.4%
Backpackers prefer to talk to locals rather than to other backpackers*	38.1%	17.8%	31.0%
Real backpackers never use guidebooks	25.0%	13.3%	20.9%
Bad experiences make for better stories	72.6%	75.6%	73.6%
Exotic destinations are preferred	66.7%	64.4%	65.9%
People who take short-term trips can still be considered	79.8%	91.1%	83.7%
Posting a video to YouTube is a great way to	69.0%	57.8%	65.1%

display travel experience			
Backpackers shun technology like iPods, Cell phones, Laptops while traveling***	54.8%	17.8%	41.9%
Hostels are just for backpackers	32.1%	22.2%	28.7%
Drinking is a part of backpacking**	42.9%	71.1%	52.7%

Note: \* notes significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*- $p < .01$ , and \*\*\*- $p < .001$

For the overall group, made up of both the Australasia and Asian subgroups, the results did not meet the criteria for a shared cultural model, as the eigenvalue ratio was less than three, the mean cultural competence score is much lower than 0.5, and there are multiple negative factor loadings. The lack of fit of the overall consensus model indicates that the respondents are potentially derived from more than one cultural model, supporting the purpose of this paper of exploring the differences in backpacker culture for our two groups. Findings from a larger scale application of CCA on backpackers that included a sample with a larger variety of nationalities (Paris, 2012) indicated that there is a shared general cultural model for backpackers.

For the Australasian group, the results indicated that there is a shared cultural model: eigenvalue ratio=8.48, mean cultural competency score of the sample=0.51, SD=0.15, and no negative factor loadings. The third model tested for the backpackers from Asia also indicates a decent model fit: eigenvalue ratio=7.01, mean cultural competency score of the sample=0.47, SD=0.15, and no negative competency scores.

Further, for the purposes of this study the applications of the CCA do not indicate whether the regional differences of the two groups does indeed explain some of variance of backpacker cultural model suggested by the CCA on the whole sample. In order to answer these remaining questions, we used the QAP Linear Regression Model to test the hypothesis that there are no systematic factors that contribute to the level of similarity between individuals. Hruschka et al. (2008) and Paris (2012) applied the test originally described by Romney et al. (2000).

The QAP linear regression model indicates that a significant proportion of the variance of the agreement matrix ( $R^2=.083$ ,  $p < .001$ ) are explained by the independent variables. Backpackers in the Asian group agree among themselves significantly more ( $p < .001$ ) than do the Australasian group. Australasian backpackers agree among themselves with only marginal significance ( $p=.07$ ). The QAP results suggest that the latent cultural impact of the individuals' geographical region (Asia and Australasian) explains a significant, albeit small (8.3%) amount of the variance in the overall cultural agreement. The small amount of variance explained, combined with the low aggregate competency scores for each group suggests that there are potentially other latent cultural identities that influence individuals' understanding of backpacking cultural domain, which could provide a basis for future studies. Paris (2012) explored some of these including technology use, age, employment status and level of previous travel experience. Other potential identities that could be explored in the future could include length of trip, number of travelling

companions, identity related to other subcultures, ethnicity, and religious background. These QAP results indicate that individuals in the two cultural groups draw from significantly different models of backpacking cultural understanding which suggests that, empirically, there are cross-cultural differences between Asian and Australasian backpackers.

To further understand the differences between the two backpacking cultural groups, we ran independent T-Tests, to examine significant differences in the level of agreement with each of the 60 cultural norm statements. Respondents from each of the regions significantly differ in the proportion of individuals responding 'yes' to 19 of the 60 cultural norm statements presented in Table 3. There is a clear difference in the perception of backpacking and partying by the two groups. Individuals from the two groups responded in a very different manner to statements having to do with the more hedonistic aspects of backpacking culture such as partying, drinking, and sex. Individuals from Australasia have a much larger proportion agreeing with statements related to the role of these hedonistic activities as part of the backpacking culture. Second, the responses suggest that Asian backpackers prefer a more structured backpacking experience with more pre-planning, less travel away from the beaten track, and a desire to visit a greater number of countries during the trip. Asian backpackers also have a higher percentage of agreement with items concerning backpacking as a form of budget travel, and that backpacking allows individuals to have a more authentic worldview. On the other hand, individuals from Australasia agree to a much greater extent that eating weird food and travelling off the beaten track are important parts of backpacking.

The two groups do share a high level of agreement (78% or greater for both groups) on quite a number of items. These included 'Facebook is useful to stay in contact with other people met during the trip', 'It's ok to spend extra money on once in a lifetime experiences', 'Backpackers often share their experiences online through Facebook, Email, and blogs', 'Socializing with other backpackers is an important part of the experience', 'Backpacking is a more free way to travel', 'Backpackers seek extreme experiences when they travel', 'Backpackers develop an understanding of other cultures', 'The journey is more important than the destination', and 'Backpackers help each other'. The following section presents discussion and conclusion of this study.

## **5.0 Discussion and Conclusion**

Backpackers from Australasia were predominantly male, which is similar to the many findings in general backpacker literature (Chitty et al., 2007; Hecht & Martin, 2006; Ian & Musa, 2008). However, for backpackers from Asia, gender representation is rather balance, with 53.4 per cent male and 46.6 per cent female. This may reflect the closer to home travel among them which provides a sense of safer backpacking in a relatively familiar environment for female backpackers. Backpackers are also rather educated which supports the previous findings (e.g. Ian & Musa, 2008; Newlands, 2004; Sorensen, 2003).

The average age of backpackers from Australasia was much younger (25.2 years), within the range recorded by other researchers (Cave et al., 2008; Chitty et al., 2007; Hecht & Martin, 2006; Jarvis & Peel, 2008; Kain & King, 2004; Maoz & Bekerman, 2010; Murphy, 2001; Newlands, 2004; Niggel & Benson, 2008; Sorensen, 2003; Speed, 2008; Teo & Leong, 2006; Visser, 2003) who recorded their age group between 20 to 29 years. On the other hand, backpackers from Asia were older, averaging at 30.5 years. The finding coincides with some of the previous researchers' (e.g. Cave et al., 2008; Maoz & Bekerman, 2010; Newlands, 2004; Speed, 2008; Speed & Harrison, 2004) who acknowledged the emergence of older backpackers.

However Asian backpackers in this study are not flashpackers as coined by Hannam and Diekmann (2010), for their rather thrifty in spending habits. Asian backpackers average daily spending is much lower (USD59) compared with Australasian backpackers (USD89). Asian backpackers travel for a much shorter duration (57.8% between 0 to 2 weeks) compared with Australasian backpackers (89.9% more than 6 weeks). The generally shorter holiday entitlement in Asia perhaps explains this. Furthermore many of Australasian backpackers (25%) were students, who tend to take longer holiday or travel as their Gap Year (Noy, 2004; Martin, 2010).

The concept of distance decay theory (Tourism Research Australia, 2005) is evident as many of the Asian backpackers had previously visited the closest regions including South East Asia, Australia/Pacific, and China/Japan. For Australasian backpackers, after visiting their own region, the next favourite destinations are Europe and North America, as well as South East Asia. Perhaps the social distance and cultural ties between Australasia with both Europe and North America helps to explain the large amount of travel to geographically distant regions. The results did show that for these two groups, Australasian and Asian backpackers, there is a large amount of previous travel by both groups to the Asia and Australia/Pacific region. This supports our justification for our research in focusing on backpackers from these two groups. The understanding of each other's needs and preferences will facilitate a better backpacking experience among them, along with better direction in products and services development for the backpackers.

Several patterns emerge from the backpackers' responses pertaining to the cultural norm statements. Backpackers from Australasia express higher level of agreement pertaining to backpacking culture such as partying, drinking, and sex. This supported by the findings of Aziz (1999), Maoz and Bekerman (2010), Uriely and Belhassen (2006) and Howard (2007) who reported that backpackers do engage in consumption of drug, alcohol and sexual encounters. One reason for this is that the individuals from Australasia are generally younger and on longer trips, and another may relate to the cultural norms of the individuals home countries.

Asian backpackers prefer to follow the beaten track and they are less flexible in terms of travel planning. This contradicts the conventional way of backpacking where backpackers tend to have a flexible schedule (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995). However, it supports Slaughter (2004) and Hottola (2008) who reported that some backpackers do prefer to visit touristic destinations. It is

not known to what extent backpackers from Asia retain their independence as claimed by Slaughter (2004). Asian backpackers are more budget conscious and this clearly indicates that they prefer the mainstream way of backpacking (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Murphy, 2001; Sorensen, 2003; Teo & Leong, 2006). Individuals from Australasia agree that travelling off the beaten track is part of backpacking culture. Thus backpackers from Australasia are more adventurous as compared to those from Asia, at least in their own minds.

Backpackers from both groups agreed that the usage of Facebook and email is an important part of the backpacking cultural experience. Socializing with other backpackers is an important part of the experience and this is parallel with the claim of many researchers (e.g. Adkins & Grant, 2007; Axup & Viller, 2006; Axup et al., 2006; Enoch & Grossman, 2010; Murphy, 2001; Peel & Steen, 2007). However little is known about the context of the interaction. This study also reports that backpackers develop an understanding of other cultures, and this could be the main motivation of backpackers (Howard, 2005; Paris & Teye, 2010).

The findings of this study have practical implications for the backpacker industry worldwide. Many of the traditional backpacker enclaves, such as Khao San Road in Bangkok, seemingly cater to the hedonistic experiences (Teo & Leong, 2006; Muzaini, 2006), and thus could alienate the growing regional market (Musa & Thirumorthi, 2011). Several alternative enclaves are starting to develop that are aiming to cater to backpackers from Asia and others who prefer experiences less focused on 'partying.' While enclaves which are suitable for Australasian backpackers may need to have sufficient entertainment facilities, alternative attractions and activities may be developed and offered to the Asian backpackers.

The differences between the two groups' perception of backpacking culture clearly points out that they are two different market segments. To further cater to the backpackers from Asia, backpacking businesses may need to provide more structured and organized experiences, familiar dining options, and facilitate easier pre-planning through online reservations. The responses of Asian backpackers suggest a certain level of psycho-centrism (Plog, 1973), and this could suggest it would be beneficial to have in place a well maintained online reservation system together with telephone support for all backpackers. These features are even more important if businesses are to attract backpackers from Asia.

Asian backpackers prefer not to venture off the beaten track, which is supported by findings in previous studies by both Slaughter (2004) and Hottola (2008) in regards to the actual behaviour of backpackers. Service providers could develop creative tour packages that include sightseeing and other related activities. For Asian tourists, a full package can ease their backpacking experience as they are on shorter trips as compared to Australasian backpackers. The sustainability of an enclave is very much dependent on the focus of the operators. Being mindful of the different needs of backpackers from different backgrounds could facilitate holiday satisfaction and perhaps loyalty intentions among backpackers. Balancing a mixture of



backpackers from different regions could attract other backpackers who avoid western centric backpacker enclave(s) because of the hedonistic behaviours that they are known for.

One limitation of this study relates to the method which was not preceded by any focus group discussions or in-depth interviews to elicit the cultural statements of the backpacker domain. The items used to measure backpacking culture were consciously adopted from previous studies many of which are somewhat western- centric in approach. However the statements used represent a large amount of 'current' thought in the backpacker literature and industry, and thus in using these statements, we were able to explore whether or not they were representative and shared among the two regional groups. Indeed, future studies could carry out in-depth interviews, focus groups, and free-listing activities in order to gain deeper insight into the perceived cultural domain of backpackers, including those from diverse national or ethnic backgrounds.

In conclusion, this study has partly addressed the concern of western-centric research orientation (Winter 2007, 2009) by applying CCA to understand the cross-cultural differences of backpackers from Australasia and Asia. Findings can be used by the backpacking industry to design and market the appropriate products and services for the stated backpacker groups. This study also extends the theoretical understanding of backpacker culture, as well as providing an example of a useful tool for future cross-cultural studies in tourism. Other future research applications of CCA could venture into the understanding of cultural differences related to tourism development and planning, niche tourism, tourism services, and destination decision making.

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